

A STUDY OF YOUNG ADULT MALES'
PERCEPTIONS OF FATHERHOOD
BEFORE BECOMING FATHERS

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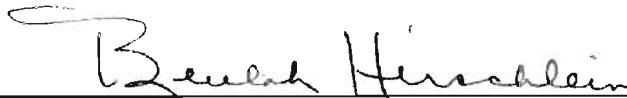
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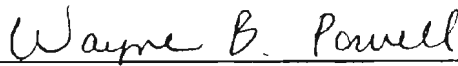


OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rate of unplanned pregnancies among young people in the United States is higher than most other countries. Women and the feelings they have about becoming a mother are generally the main focus. Men's feelings about becoming fathers are all too often not considered. In 1975, Lamb published a paper in which he described fathers as the "forgotten contributors to child development" (Lamb, 1986, p. xi). This statement becomes increasingly more valuable as fathers begin to play more active roles in their children's lives, which is even more reason for research to focus on how men perceive their role of father, before they become fathers (Lamb, 1986).

In American society parenting research focuses mainly on women's opinions. Women are the ones who get pregnant and give birth to the child, so their perceptions of parenthood are in many ways valued above those of men. It is likely that men would perceive their roles as potential fathers as important and valuable if they were given equal attention in parenthood research. Men may be taking their cue from this lack of interest and carrying it into their fatherhood role. Questions about fatherhood perceptions can only be answered through research

that directly involves men. The aim of this study is to learn more about how young adult males perceive their future role of father.

Background

The family roles of men as fathers in America have changed dramatically in the past two decades. The vast majority of these changes have been a result of women's changing roles. These changes have resulted in a wide array of fatherhood research. Research into the new roles of men in reproduction and childrearing are only now being recognized. Social scientist have neglected the questions of if, when and how often men become fathers (Swanson, 1985). In American society it is taken for granted that it always requires two people to conceive a child. The dual nature of the inception of parenthood is largely ignored by some women who feel compelled to exclude the father from their child's life. The interest in why men want to become fathers has been considerably less than that of women.

The small amount of work on fatherhood motivation has basically consisted of the reaction they have to their wives' pregnancies (Gerson, 1986). Swanson (1985) raises the question of "why involve men" in the first phase of fatherhood. With the current levels of unplanned pregnancies, abortions, and fatherless children, the potential phase of becoming a father is even more prevalent. Earlier sexual maturity and the occurrence of the initial sexual activity

at younger ages, combined with couple's waiting longer to marry, leave men and women facing more years of sexual activity before marriage (Swanson, 1985).

The nineties more than ever before has become a time of postponing children as more women wait until they have established a career. This change has also affected when and if a man will become a father.

Problem Statement

Although parenthood is a basic aspect included in adult identity (Yablonsky, 1982), there is still not enough literature that explores what fatherhood means to young adult males who have never had children. The majority of these issues are explored by looking at the mother or intended mother. Women are given the tools at a very young age, by way of dolls, to begin identifying what it would be like to become a mother. As the norm, young men are not given this type of learning tool. Boys are given rough and tumble toys such as cars, trucks, and sports paraphernalia. The only direct image of fatherhood boys have is that of their own father. Through the relationship they have with their father, boys are able to learn what it means to become a father (Yablonsky, 1982).

As children, boys tend to be greatly involved emotionally with their fathers as models of how to act in their male roles and as future fathers. Sons strongly identify with their own fathers and feel that they will have some of the same experiences as fathers (Yablonsky, 1982). Society does not give boys much of

an opportunity to elaborate on what they have learned. Males are not socialized to be as concerned as women about the emotional aspect of a relationship; rather they emphasize the mechanical aspect. As Radin (1986) points out there are numerous benefits to children who have fathers that are involved early in their lives. He found indications that children's intellectual functioning was stimulated more in families with high father involvement. Radin attributed this to the fact that fathers appear to have a different way of interacting with children; they tend to be more physical, more proactive, and less stereotyped in their play behavior than mothers (Radin, 1986).

The culture we live in greatly idealizes mothers as someone with intuitive knowledge of how to care for a child without feeling awkward or ambivalent. This type of thinking does a great disservice to parents in two ways. First it assumes that there is an inborn ability and desire to nurture the growth of a child; also it is assumed that these are inborn qualities that are exclusive to women. Ruddick (1980) stated that nurturance is a range of feelings and skills that can and must be practiced and then selves nurtured. For some women motherhood appears to come more naturally; however many more women take a more practical approach toward caring for their children, just as they will most likely learn the depth and limits of their maternal feeling "on the job." By the same token, as Pleck (1981) pointed out, the capacity for emotional involvement with their children and the ability to care for their children may come naturally to men or may need to be developed. This type of information helps support the need for further research on how men perceive fatherhood before they ever become

fathers. The more information men are given before they become fathers, the more confident they will feel when they have children.

Purpose of the Study

The idea of helping young adult males think about their future role of father is the basis for this study. The purpose of this study is to determine how the relationship they had with their own fathers as children has affected their perceptions of fatherhood. The focus is on what strengths, skills, and knowledge young adult male's view as important for a father to possess. A second purpose of this study is to give potential fathers the opportunity to think about their attitudes toward fatherhood before they have a child. Most men do not think of their role as a father until they are already expecting a child. Fatherhood research can provide more information that will help men think about how they would deal with fatherhood long before a child is expected.

The research questions in this study include the following: (1) Is a particular fathering style related to a son's attitude toward future fatherhood? (2) Are perceived problems with having children related to young men's desire to have children? (3) Is the way men view women's maternal role related to their reasons for having children? (4) Do the men feel that their future children would benefit from having them as fathers? (5) Do the risks men are willing to encounter relate to their decisions to have children or their eagerness to have

children? Demographic characteristics of the respondents were also examined. These included birth position and number of siblings.

Research Hypotheses

This study will examine the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis I. Subjects desire to change from their fathers parenting style will be positively related to their reasons for having children.

Hypothesis II. How strongly subjects rate problems with having children will be positively related to how eagerly they anticipate having children.

Hypothesis III. Subjects perceptions of women's maternal role will be positively related to their reasons for having children.

Hypothesis IV. The amount of risks subjects are willing to endure to have children will be positively related to the level at which they feel a child would benefit from having them as a father.

Hypothesis V. The amount of risks subjects are willing to endure to have children will be positively related to their level of anticipation for having children.

Hypothesis VI. How subjects view the impact of children on their parents' relationship will be positively related with how they rate stages of fatherhood.

Significance of the Study

Fatherhood literature that is currently available is mainly focused on men who have already become fathers, or on women's perceptions of fathering. In a time when some men and women are postponing parenthood it is important that we begin to consider how men perceive their future role as potential fathers. LaRossa (1988) believes that the basic acceptance of the "culture of fatherhood" is not in touch with how fathers really act, and that this causes men to be ambivalent about their performance as fathers. Men thinking about what fatherhood means to them could decrease some of this ambivalence, before a child is ever created. Belsky and Hawkins (1989) state that the current work and family demographics show that larger proportions of new fathers will become more involved; however if they are unprepared for this experience, they are more likely to be discouraged. This investigation may be helpful in preparing men for fatherhood, which could ultimately benefit their children.

Definition of Research Terms

Specific terms of study are defined as follows:

Fatherhood- Costello (1992) defines fatherhood as "the state of being a father, or the qualities or spirit of being a father" (p.485).

Parenthood- Costello (1992) describes parenthood as "to be or act as a parent" (p. 983).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that has been selected for studying fatherhood perceptions is symbolic interaction theory. This is a respected theory in family studies for two main reasons. First, symbolic interaction has a strong conceptual history that continues to generate interest and excitement. Second, symbolic interaction has been utilized by researchers who have made a real effort to incorporate their ideas into the empirical world (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Symbolic interaction theory is only one of a few theories that continues to rely on qualitative and quantitative research.

Historians are beginning to realize that the early founders of symbolic interaction considered the theory to be a scientific application to social life. Herbert Blumer coined the term "social interactionism" in 1936, but the basis for the idea was developed 20 to 30 years earlier (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). There are numerous people credited with the development of this theory; therefore one person cannot be given sole credit. Some of the main contributors include Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead, William Issac Thomas, Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, Willard Waller, Rueben Hill, and Herbert Blumer. Today more than ever before this theory is still very relevant because of its

continued philosophy that "science begins with ideas, it is research that is the hallmark of the scientific way of knowing" (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p. 135).

Symbolic interaction could serve as a basic way to understand how fathers, in relation to their family and society, create symbolic words. This concept could further be used to understand the way in which these words influence the behavior of the father and family involved. Marsiglio (1998) believes that in the procreative realm symbolic interactionism is important because it highlights the connection between a man's relationship with others and the way he defines himself. The way others interact with a man affects the way a man interprets another person's behavior and how he sees himself as a procreative being.

According to symbolic interaction theory individuals, are always negotiating and renegotiating the way they define themselves in their everyday lives (Marsiglio, 1998). LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) presented four concepts by pragmatists that are a major part of the foundation of symbolic interaction. Each of these concepts serves as valuable insight from the past that adds to many areas of future fatherhood research.

Assumptions of Symbolic Interaction

LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) articulate seven basic assumptions of symbolic interaction theory. The authors analyzed the assumptions set under

three themes of symbolic interaction, and the current author includes application examples for fatherhood research:

A. The first theme encompasses the first three assumptions because they emphasize the importance of meaning for behavior.

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them. This could be applied to how fathers must be understood by the meanings of their action(s).
2. Meanings arise in the process of interaction between people. In the case of a father and a child, for example, this process could include individual perceptions of the interaction or shared interpretation of the interaction.
3. Meanings are handled in, and are modified through, an interpretive process used by a person in dealing with the things that they encounter. For a father this could mean that the interpretation he has of reality might come through the meanings assigned by the culture he lives in.

B. The second theme refers to the fourth and fifth assumptions, and deals with the importance and development of self concept.

4. Individuals are not born with a sense of self but develop self-concepts through social interaction. This may include the father- child relationship, or the lack thereof, and the self-concepts that arise as a result of this interaction.

5. Once developed, self-concepts provide an important motivation for behavior. This includes the self-values, self-beliefs, self-feelings, and self-assessment of the father or child in the relationship.
- C. The third theme focuses on symbolic interactionists' societal assumptions, and includes the last two assumptions.
6. The larger cultural and societal process influences individuals and small groups. This could, for example, be the folkways or mores that a father adds to or brings away from his family.
 7. Through social interaction in everyday situations, individuals are able to work out the details of social structure. This could apply to the influence that a father's attitudes and perceptions have on his child, while the child interacts in a social structure.

The Concepts of Symbolic Interaction

There are three main concepts of symbolic interaction outlined by LaRossa & Reitzes (1993). The first of these concepts is "identities", and is defined as the roles we play in life; this concept also includes identity salience. The second concept is "self-esteem" and is the most often studied aspect of self-concept which makes it very applicable to fatherhood research; influences in self-esteem, whether positive or negative, could result in either a positive or

negative father child interaction. The third concept, "roles" refers to standards given to those in a social position. Part of this concept includes "role taking", which allows a person to combine role behaviors with role meanings that are set by other entities such as society.

Another part of this concept is "role making" this is the designing and modifying of a role to make it more clearly stated; this could mean how the role of the father has changed over time. Society has expectations of this role, which if not clearly defined could lead to role conflict or role strain for the father (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

Four important concepts of symbolic interaction that are outlined by Klein and White (1996) are very relevant in fatherhood research. The first concept is "self" and explains the importance of self in symbolic interactionism. Klein and White (1996) believe that the idea of self is based on symbols and consciousness. This means that the self is developed by our consciousness from two perspectives of "I" and "me." The self as an object is made up of the perspectives of certain others when we take the role of certain people in order to see ourselves as they might. This situation is thus created by the perspective of generalization of roles, or the generalized other (Klein & White, 1996).

The second concept is "socialization" and is described as the process we go through to acquire the symbols, beliefs, and attitudes of our culture. Klein and White (1996) explain that a child's play stage helps the child learn and practice role taking, and that the game stage in socialization helps a child in the more complex task of learning the rules that govern all social actors in the game.

They further describe the game stage in childhood as the most complex (Klein & White, 1996).

The third concept is “role” and has become one of the most basic concepts of symbolic interaction and relates well to fatherhood roles. One important aspect of roles is the expectations that the actor and others have about how the role is to be performed. The clarity of role expectations is another area of importance. It is virtually impossible for the actor to perform his/her role, or others to perform in accordance with the actor, if there are no clear expectations shared by both sides. Role strain develops when the actor does not have the appropriate resources to enact a role or roles.

When an actor has multiple roles the overload of expectations could become too much and create role overload or strain. When the expectations of one role does not compile with the expectations of another role, this type of conflict usually creates role strain because the actor is unable to fulfill both of the contradictory roles at the same time (Klein & White, 1996).

The final concept is “definition of the situation” and is described accordingly, what a person defines as real will have real consequences. The definition of a situation helps symbolic interactionists’ understand the role of perception and how it plays a part in forming our behavior (Klein & White, 1996).

Criticisms of Symbolic Interaction

One of the main criticisms of symbolic interaction is that as a whole the

concepts it offers are vague and poorly defined. There is no doubt that family interactionists' in the family field sometimes offer vague and ill-defined concepts, but symbolic interactionists' seem to be making a real effort to fix such shortcomings (Klein & White, 1996). Other criticisms of symbolic interaction state that it has not been operationally defined or empirically tested in its main ideas and beliefs.

Another criticism is that it does not have clear unambiguous interrelated propositions. There is also a criticism that symbolic interaction is accused of over- estimating the power of individuals to create the results that are wanted. Symbolic interaction theorists also have been accused of not being able to formally or systematically develop this theory. Others criticize symbolic interaction saying interactionists have not accepted the unconscious, and have left out the emotional aspect of human behavior (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

The strengths of symbolic interaction theory must include the fact that the authors have done a really good job in expanding their miniconcepts. Another strength is that recently symbolic interaction theorists have made an effort to expand and take larger social realities into account (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). A final very strong strength is that symbolic interaction theorists have introduced promising leads that will hopefully be evident in fatherhood research. LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) are optimistic that this theory will continue to grow, along with advances for fathers and their families. As Klein and White (1996) explain, it may just be that all theories start out with some degree of ambiguity and

vagueness, and that it is the job of future theorists to refine the efforts of the forebears.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are at least four ways that have been described by Lamb (1986) that have enabled a father to have a substantial impact on their child's development. Breadwinning is still seen as a key component in the fatherhood role, even if a dual-earner couple is involved (Pleck, 1986). The second important influence is emotional support to other people such as the mother. The third father influence comes from direct interaction with the child (Lamb, 1986). The fourth influence is emotional support. The emotional support is considered an important but indirect source of influence. Lamb (1986) felt that this support tends to enhance the mother-child relationship. This type of relationship according to Lamb acts as a source of emotional support. Rutter (1979) believed that this type of relationship enhances the quality of a child's positive adjustment.

The majority of research on paternal influences focuses more on direct influences, even though there are multiple aspects of a father's role. A father can affect the development of his child in several ways other than direct interaction (Lamb, 1986). A great deal of attention has been given recently to the changing roles of fathers, with a main emphasis on "the new father" who is

by Lamb's (1986) definition intensely involved in the everyday care and raising of his children. The evidence of the new fatherhood is mainly journalistic and researchers are not sure how representative the men featured in this definition are to the general population (Lamb, 1986).

Many studies have been created to help determine how much time fathers spend with their children and what activities they are involved in during this time (Pleck, 1983). Gerson (1986) found that men had parenting fantasies that were more confident and less developed than were those of the women with whom they were involved. She also found that men envisioned themselves in traditional roles with regard to their future children (Gerson, 1986).

One answer for why there is so little research data that is derived directly from fathers comes from Lewis (1986), who stated that fathers are notoriously hard to study. One reason Lewis gave was that men tend to work during the same time of day that most research is conducted (Lewis, 1986).

Brief History of Fatherhood

With the end of WWII came a new conceptualization of fatherhood. Two aspects of fatherhood that remained important were bread winning and moral guardianship. The focus later shifted to emphasize a father's function as a sex-role model, especially for sons. For the first time in the mid 1970's, fathers were being identified as active, nurturing, and care taking parents. While the media and filmmakers had been promoting fathers for the last 10 years, citizens had a

very different concept of fathering (Lamb, 1986). Research in the 1970's began to focus more clearly on the father's effect on child development. The initial focus was on observing fathers' patterns of interaction with their children and later moving further toward appreciating the more complex interactions and relationships in the family (Lamb, 1981). The increasing interest in the world concerning men's procreative and paternal roles fits well with the individual struggles people were facing with changes in demographic patterns as they relate to marriage, divorce, remarriage, and childbearing (Marsiglio, 1998).

The first large-scale attempt to emphasize men's potential roles and responsibilities as they pertain to family planning and fatherhood was in 1984. The Office of Family Planning in the Department of Human Services awarded small grants to 20 agencies to help develop male involvement programs. In February 1997 scholars and social services providers were assembled in Washington, D. C., to talk about how to improve pregnancy programs by focusing more attention on men's sexual and procreative roles (Marsiglio, 1998).

Causes such as the promotion of research and policy initiatives have been aided by the new research and policy oriented centers that address fatherhood issues. These organizations have a main objective to understand and promote the positive involvement of fathers in their children's lives. The efforts by policy makers in their attempt to improve the rate at which paternity is established for children, and increase the collection of child support payments from fathers not living in the home, have all played a major role in bringing attention to fatherhood issues (Marsiglio, 1998).

Increasingly researchers have begun to acknowledge the reciprocal socialization between parent and child. Mothers and fathers have direct and indirect effects on their child, and children have direct and indirect effects on the mother, the father, and their marital relationship (Lamb, 1981).

Paternal Identity

Marsiglio (1998) describes two symbolic forms that are important to an individual's life and the way that individual relates to others. One is a "way of forming social bonds" and two is "ritual practices." Social processes that help people establish formal or informal ties with each other are ways of forming social bonds. Activities included in ritual practices, such as a wedding, enable people to explain their needs, moods, motives, and feelings. Because a ritual practice might be a part of the process in forming certain types of social bonds, the two social forms are sometimes related (Marsiglio, 1998).

Although there are several ways to establish paternity, establishing paternity is one of the most basic and important images for men in the procreative realm. In its crudest form, it represents a man's recognition of being someone's father. Paternal identity does not guarantee that a man will behave in any certain way, and the level of responsibility a father accepts varies. Paternal identities are fundamentally expressed personally or psychologically, while the variety of ways to establish paternity involves a combination of legal, social, and medical intervention (Marsiglio, 1998).

The most common informal social aspect of developing paternal bonds is associated with the involvement men have in the labor and delivery of their children. The time shortly after labor and delivery is likely to be the most significant moment for men. The motivation a father has, the extent to which he is permitted to be involved, and whether or not he is given the opportunity to hold his child for the first time immediately after birth; represent basic gestures for establishing a paternal social bond. Today this bonding process for men begins during the period of gestation. This social paternal gesture may be expressed differently in men who formally adopt or stepfathers who assume paternal rights without formally adopting (Marsiglio, 1998).

There are not many rituals in the United States that help men develop their paternal identity; however one ritual considered significant is prepared childbirth classes. These classes help fathers learn to more fully appreciate their father-in-waiting role; they also give men a chance to learn about the process of birth with their partner. Fathers-in-waiting still do not receive as much attention as their pregnant partners, but they are now recognized more than ever through prenatal classes, father baby showers, and couple showers (Marsiglio, 1998). An area in which fathers have typically been seen as more involved than women is in the domain of play. Parke (1990) presented groundbreaking research to dispel the belief that this play was nothing more than entertainment and had little developmental effect. Parke's (1990) call for attention to this area may be seen as a very important move toward valuing an area where men consistently demonstrate significant involvement with their children (Parke, 1990).

Paternal Involvement

Palkovitz (1997) believes that by giving fatherhood involvement a broad definition, three main objectives can be accomplished. First fathers can be involved with their children in many ways. Second there is a wide range of potentially overlapping aspects associated with the numerous ways fathers are able to make a contribution to their children's welfare. Third there are vast individual and sub-cultural differences in how persons define and invest in these dimensions (Palkovitz, 1997). The most basic approach to defining paternal involvement shows men's experiences as fathers can be grouped within one of three overlapping areas of functioning: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

Palkovitz (1997) stated that any behavioral expression that could be described as paternal involvement will also contain cognitive and affective components. Much of the research on paternal involvement has examined how much time fathers spend with their children and the types of activities that occupy that time (Palkovitz, 1997).

Charnov et al. (1987) felt that it was important to consider three main components of paternal involvement. The first and most restrictive type is time spent in actual one-on-one interaction with a child. Charnov and his colleagues labeled this "engagement" or "interaction" and does not include time spent in child-related housework or time spent in one room while the child plays in another room. These activities imply parental accessibility to the child, rather than direct interaction. The second type of involvement is "indirect" involvement

and includes little if any direct contact by the father. The father would monitor his children's activities through a second party. The final type of involvement is the hardest to define, but it is possibly the most important of all. It incorporates the extent to which the parent takes ultimate responsibility for the child's welfare and care. Most of the time spent being a responsible parent is not spent in direct interaction with the child (Charnov et al., 1987).

Factors That Increase or Decrease Paternal Involvement

Benokraitis (1985) found that fathers in dual-earner families are more likely to be discouraged if they feel uncomfortable in their domestic duties. A second reason he found for father's discouragement was the mother's unwillingness or inability to share the role and power when it came to domestic activities. Lack of support from friends, peers, and relatives is also a factor in men's decreased fatherhood involvement. Benokraitis (1985) felt that just as the community does not want women to enter the job market, it also does not prepare men to be fathers. It also is not unusual for friends, peers, and relatives to be suspicious of any man who takes on the role of stay-at-home dad. More extreme examples that come from men who stay at home to care for the children includes reports of curiosity, hostility, and suspicion from their friends and neighbors. Benokraitis (1985) reported that the reason homemaker fathers are

subjected to doubt, skepticism, and rejection is because they are not fulfilling society's image of making it in America.

Men who share in homemaking are ridiculed or ostracized which creates more pressure for men to spend more time on the job with their peers. Benokraitis believes that this pressure explains why even professional fathers hardly take any time off when they have a sick child or for holidays. Lamb (1986) found four factors to be crucial when it came to understanding paternal involvement. The first factor was motivation; a survey by Quinn and Staines (1979) suggested that 40 percent of fathers wanted more time to spend with their children almost two decades ago.

Lamb (1986) felt that changes in paternal motivation can be mainly attributed to the women's movement and the questions raised about traditional male and female roles. In the second factor Lamb suggests that even if men are motivated about their paternal role, lack of skills is a serious barrier. Support is the third major factor raised, in which Lamb says is most importantly needed from their partner. The fourth factor outlined by Lamb is that women's attitudes and assumptions have changed so fast that a conflict with men is more likely to occur (Lamb, 1986).

Pleck (1982) four years earlier reports just the opposite of Lamb, he feels that in the last decade and a half women's attitudes toward paternal involvement have changed very little. The sharp contrast of opinions in four short years is very promising in terms of progress made in the role of fathers. Stryker (1980) felt that several factors were related to males' identity as fathers and their role.

Two of these factors include the extent to which a father is committed to being a certain type of father and his conviction to sustain this relationship (Stryker, 1980). A father's paternal identity depends to some degree on how he responds to the real and imagined expectations he has (Marsiglio, 1995).

Positive Paternal Interaction

Palkovitz (1997) explores how paternal involvement can be understood by considering a series of simultaneously occurring continua. The first most obvious continuum involves the amount of time fathers invest in any form of paternal involvement. Palkovitz feels that it is important to realize that the time fathers invest in their children's lives does not always reflect their level of involvement. Some fathers may spend little time playing with their children, but their degree of involvement may be very high if they make important decisions about how their children's playtime is structured. Other fathers may spend a large amount of time doing certain things with or for their children, but they may invest little of their heart and soul into these situations. They may simply be going through the motions of being involved (Palkovitz, 1997).

The next continuum explored by Palkovitz (1997) is how observable a father's involvement may be in certain situations. A father's thoughts about planning or being involved in his children's lives may not represent observable behaviors; however this cognitive activity may greatly influence how a father interacts with his children in different settings. Palkovitz believes that fathers

who spend a lot of time thinking about ways they may be able to help their children handle personal problems or developmental issues are more likely to respond to their child's situation in a positive manner. He feels that this is especially true when comparing them to fathers who respond to their children without thinking about it (Palkovitz, 1997).

Degree of saliency is Palkovitz's (1997) third continuum, and it appears to be closely related to the "degree of involvement" continuum. In some cases tasks were found to be highly connected to fathers. Palkovitz felt this was because father's were either happy or disliked them. Situations in which fathers are completely apathetic to some type of paternal involvement are symbolic of an extreme end of the saliency continuum.

The final continuum is the extent to which the involvement is direct or indirect. There is a traditional importance placed on the breadwinner role; Palkovitz felt that most of what fathers have done for their children is often seen in this way. Fathers who live in the home and work overtime to economically provide for their children are involved in indirect forms of active participation. This means that fathers who live outside the home and pay child support or observe their children's lives with the aid of third parties are also indirectly involved (Palkovitz, 1997)

Transition into Fatherhood

Earlier research from Culp and Osofsky (1989) looking at the transition to

fatherhood and the risks involved will become even more significant in the next ten years as fathers become more involved in their children's lives. During pregnancy and post partum, a couple will encounter certain rewards along with the stresses and shifts in their relationship. In the last couple of decades studies have focused on the method, changes, and possible risk factors for mothers; they have only recently begun to focus on the father (Culp & Osofsky, 1989). Belsky (1979) reported that higher levels of father involvement and marital interaction covaried positively with each other. Aschenbrenner, Feldman and Nash (1983) found that marital quality is a powerful predictor of fathering patterns.

Boles and colleagues (1985) suggested that couples who were more at ease relating to each other before their baby's birth were more likely to comfortably relate to each other after the baby's birth. They also found that father's satisfaction level decreased slightly between the first six months post partum; satisfaction had its greatest decline in the first six months and declined little thereafter (Boles et al., 1985). Belsky, Lang, and Rovine (1985) also found a decline in the marital relationship when they compared the couple's last trimester ratings to those nine months post partum. Both men and women became increasingly more dissatisfied with the amount of positive behaviors they received from their partners. Husbands were found to be the unhappiest, and they wanted their wives to be more positive toward them (Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985).

Rubin (1990) still believes that a man's first allegiance is to work, if not in work, then in-deed; for women it is still love. Parenting is viewed very differently for men and women. For many men the conflict arises when they try to resolve the anger and resentment they feel as a result of their own father's neglect (Rubin, 1990). Rubin feels that we must go back to our childhood in order to fully understand and grasp the power with which our parents have influenced our adult lives and behavior long after we have learned new ways of being (Rubin, 1990). Ginath (1974) described several psychopathological reactions by men who had become fathers. These reactions included psychoses, which were generated by unresolved childhood conflicts. He also warned that if men developed this condition, future pregnancies and childbirth's would aggravate the situation (Ginath, 1974).

Before becoming a first time father, men are relatively self-contained individuals. The pregnancy, being a new parent and marital changes can cause emotional problems in some, but not all men (Culp & Osofsky, 1989). It does not seem that all men, especially those who become fathers, experience considerable shifts and internal equilibrium. Most men experience profound changes in their sense of responsibility (Culp & Osofsky, 1989). Even men who do not display overt psychiatric symptoms before the pregnancy and after the pregnancy may still have considerable liability and unsettled feelings. These men display symptoms that are similar to a mentally ill person; although their symptoms may not be as intense, they are more transient, and they are more treatment responsive (Culp & Osofsky, 1989).

According to recent literature, the conflicts that have been observed in new and expectant fathers seem to be universal. How the conflict is manifested depends on the man's personality and life circumstances at the time. In an optimal situation this would seem to be a time when an expectant or new father would have a better opportunity to resolve past conflicts (Culp & Osofsky, 1989). Current literature recognizes that the shifts that occur in each parent during and after the pregnancy can have a major impact on them as individuals, a couple, and in the relationship they have with their child (Boles et al., 1985). Culp and Osofsky (1986) found that 29% of married fathers expecting their first child showed clinical levels of depression and 47% had low self-esteem. They also found that expectant fathers reported having less of a role in marital decision-making, and they were more dissatisfied with the decisions made (Culp & Osofsky, 1986).

Ross (1994) found that universally fathers have their own gender-specific tasks that they do in their homes. He states that a child could suffer from too much mothering and that fathering is the answer for this type of toxicity. For example, a mother's love could hamper a toddler's progress towards independence and sexual definition. Ross also feels that a father acts to disrupt this bond and introduce maleness to the toddler's life, while allowing him to take on roles of an emerging gender identity. Herzog (1980) said that adult men are "kamikazeeing" their way into a woman and child's life that would otherwise be serene. A man's more high keyed excitement would allow the child to venture out beyond the calm of the maternal universe (Ross, 1994).

Men Becoming Fathers

Early research into the effects of a man's transition into fatherhood largely assumed that the transition would be difficult for men. In contrast the research on the transition into motherhood generally stresses joyful anticipation. For men the transition-to-parenthood research focused mainly on the challenges, often referring to crisis or a stressful turning point. Research from the late 1970's and the 1980's have reported some of the positive aspects of becoming a father; however research for men has mostly ignored the joy and opportunity for personal growth that fatherhood enables men to experience (Cowan, 1988). Bronstein and Cowan (1988) found that some areas of current research allow us to appreciate the ideas that fatherhood, as a major adult role in men's lives, can be a generator of men's continued development (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988).

Newman and Newman (1988) explore attachment ideas in which they say that parent-child attachment grows out of responding to the child and is shaped in an ongoing process through ever-changing parent-child interactions. They suggest that both men and women experience significant adult development cognitively and emotionally through this process (Newman & Newman, 1988). Belsky (1987) stated that the powerful experience of fatherhood would yield rewards for fathers who are actively involved in their children's lives. Cowan (1988) felt that fatherhood may bring about a shift in a man's sense of self, with the salience of work and partner identities somewhat making way for an increase

in parent identity. Daniels and Weingarten (1988) stated that although the primacy of men's work identity changes a little, their focus on work often takes a new perspective with fatherhood. They felt that the increase in motivation to be a good provider has occurred because the welfare of the children depends on the man's ability to support the family (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988).

Summary

Literature related to the present study was scarce. There has been little if any literature that directly focused on young adult (pre-fatherhood) males' perspectives of the relationship they had with their own fathers. This is an area of fatherhood research that has been suggested but not pursued. Fatherhood research in this area could go a long way in explaining how young men perceive their roles as fathers and how the relationship they had with their father's affects their perceptions. Currently there are far too many men in this country who are missing out on a relationship with their children; whether it is by choice or other circumstances, the cycle is set into motion long before the child is created.

Men are not being prepared for parenthood to the degree that the majority of women are. There is an abundance of research available on the effects of women's parents-child relationship, and how those relationships shape their perceptions of parenthood. If we can start by gaining an understanding of why some men can come out of a negative experience with their own fathers, and still create a positive experience for their own children. Also, it is interesting to

explore why other men come out of the best of fatherhood situations, and yet never reproduce that quality relationship with their own children.

Research such as this is very important because it focuses on men before they become fathers. This is important because it will help researchers understand the direction of the future relationship before men have an effect on their children's lives. The majority of fatherhood research studies fatherhood relationships after there has already been negative outcomes. A goal of the present study is help prevent the negative outcomes by creating an awareness for future fathers and professionals.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Type of Research

The current research study is descriptive. According to Gay (1987), "descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study" (p. 189). This study attempts to answer questions about the relationship between young adult men's experiences with their own fathers growing up and their attitudes about becoming a father. Typically, descriptive research is concerned with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, demographic information, conditions, and procedures (Gay, 1987).

In descriptive research, data are usually collected with some type of survey, questionnaire, interview, or observation. In the current research, a questionnaire was used. In descriptive research, the researcher has no control over the results; he/she simply measures what exists. In the current research, the researcher assessed the subjects' opinions about their fathers, their estimations of their fathers' parenting, and their appraisals of their own motivations and ideas about becoming fathers. According to Gay (1987)

descriptive research samples must be carefully selected, and appropriate relationships and conclusions must be derived from the data. In the current study, the researcher administered the survey to a sample of convenience. Administering a questionnaire to an intact group essentially eliminated the lack of response problem that often occurs when questionnaires are used.

Research Design

This exploratory study examines the association between the type of relationship young adult males had with their fathers growing up and the impact on their motivation to become fathers. The major dependent variable in this study, as in Gerson's (1986), was the intensity of the subjects' desire to have children. There is a secondary and more exploratory analysis of motivation concerned with the degree to which having children was judged to facilitate the expression of important life values. Independent variables were demographic questions that are relevant in a study concerning parenthood motivation. More importantly the relationship subjects shared with their fathers' was investigated, along with the variable of original family size (Gerson, 1980). Minor variables were also studied to give full range to demographic influences.

Subjects' memories of their own fathers was hypothesized to be directly related to degree of motivation, and was empirically supported by two earlier studies of young women (Gerson, 1980) and younger men and women (Lott, 1973). Memories of early childhood were extended to include, on an exploratory

basis, perceptions of parents' attentiveness and how demanding they were (Gerson, 1980). How demanding a parent was during childhood was found in a previous study Rabin and Greene (1968) to be significantly correlated with the quality of parenthood motivation for both men and women.

Selection of Subjects

Convenience sampling was used to obtain subjects. Capon (1988) describes convenience sampling as selecting the closest live bodies. In convenience sampling there is no guarantee that the participants are representative of the larger population (Capon, 1988). Participants were selected based on several criteria. The main criterion was that subjects be young adult males between the ages of 18-30 years old. The males must not have ever had children. Another less important criterion was that subjects were currently enrolled in an undergraduate class on the main Oklahoma State University campus at the time of the study. Classes were selected based on the population of males enrolled in the class during the semester of the study.

Professors teaching the courses were contacted on two separate occasions: first to find out the population of males in their class, and again to set up a date for the study to be administered. A total of 119 subjects were available on the day of administration. The Index of Parenthood Motivation (IPM) (Gerson, 1980) was explained to the subjects before it was administered. Participants were presented with the purpose of the study and the criteria for

being a part of the study. Participants were given a consent form and instructions for completing the IPM. Questions pertaining to reasons for the present study and current research being conducted surrounding the study were all answered before the questionnaire was given. Consent forms were signed prior to beginning the questionnaire, explaining anything that had not been clear up to that point. The IPM took approximately 15-20 minutes for instruction and completion time. Usable instruments were obtained from one hundred and four participants. Fifteen instruments were not returned at the end of testing.

According to Gay (1987), "30 subjects are generally considered to be a minimally acceptable sample size" (p. 231). The subjects in this study were believed to be a homogeneous group partially because of their selection of the same academic major. It was anticipated that subjects were also rather homogeneous on geographic, age, and ethnicity variables. According to Ray (1993), when homogeneity is a characteristic, fewer people are needed for the sample.

Instrument

As indicated earlier, fatherhood research is in a state of infancy when compared to research on other stages and tasks of family life. The review of literature produced very few instruments that had been used to study fathers. The Index of Parenthood Motivation Inventory by Gerson (1980) had been used in two studies prior to the present study. Dr. Gerson was contacted prior to the

modification of the instrument and gave her approval via the telephone for use and modification of her instrument.

A modified version of Gerson's (1980) Index of Parenthood Motivation was the only instrument used for this study. Dr. Gerson originally designed the IPM to explore parenthood motivation in young women. Gerson (1986) used the IPM to study the perceived importance of having a child for women, while including instrumental variables as key correlates for men. The IPM lends itself to being used in a correlational design to assess the degree to which two or more variables vary together.

The modified IPM was subjected to instrument review by the thesis advisor and the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). The main intention of the instrument review was to ensure that all the questions would be directed toward young adult males. A second intention of the instrument review was to protect the integrity of the IPM questionnaire, ensuring that it could be completed in a manageable time. The IPM is a basic eight-part questionnaire developed as a wide-band measure of parenthood motivation. Under each part are several items. After modification there were 165 items remaining. Approximately one-third of the participants answered Part II, Section 2 (ACTIVITIES) incorrectly so this section was eliminated entirely. Within the eliminated section there were 30 items, which left 135 items in the modified version of the IPM used in this study.

Data Collection

Since the present study required young adult males the researcher contacted professors who would be the most likely to have a large population of these students. The participants consisted mainly of those with an agricultural major. Professors were contacted based solely on a high percentage of male students in their class. The researcher went to four separate classes on April 30, 1998, to administer the instrument.

The researcher was first given a brief introduction by the professor of the class. The researcher then explained the criteria for participants to each class. Those who did not meet the criteria were excused. Consent forms were then distributed and their purpose was explained (see Appendix B). Copies of consent forms were made available to participants. Participants were told that their responses would be confidential. Instrument identification numbers were used for tracking purposes. Numbers were used in consecutive order. The identification numbers were also valuable in coding and entering the data from the IPM. Individual names were in no way identified with specific questionnaires. Copies of the IPM were then distributed and explained to each class.

Participants were encouraged to ask any questions they had concerning the study. Questionnaires were completed in 15 to 20 minutes, and were then placed face down on tables at the front of each classroom. A copy of the modified version of the IPM may be found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the modified IPM was collected and numerically coded. SPSS software was utilized to calculate the data. The IPM used a Likert scale to identify the strength of response. Data was then entered into the computer directly from each questionnaire. One hundred and nineteen questionnaires were distributed and of those 104 were completed and returned. Each of the eleven sections in the modified IPM was assigned names based on what the section encompassed. Within the eight there were 165 items that were also given names, the names were based on the question each section asked.

In order to become somewhat familiar with the data, after entering the data into an SPSS file, the researcher ran simple frequencies and means for all sections of the questionnaire. The principal components, factor analysis procedure, was then run to determine whether all of the items within the scale were needed to describe the variable. Results were not conclusive therefore the researcher utilized the scale as it had been used by Gerson. Because participants did not accurately follow instructions for the follow-up rankings intended in Parts V and VI, those responses were eliminated from further analysis. The answers presented in the eliminated sections were inconsistently provided and at times fewer than three responses were given.

Pearson product moment correlations were then calculated to determine significant relationships between variables listed in the six hypotheses. The .05 significance level was established for each hypothesis. A correlational study was

selected because the relationship between the variables could be described numerically. Correlations were appropriate because they measure the strength of association between two variables. They also reflect how closely scores on two variables go together, by assessing the degree to which two or more variables covary.

Correlational studies, as in this study, are designed to examine specific relationships between variables. This study was designed to determine the relationship between variables that were not controlled by the investigator. More specifically, Pearson product-moment correlation was chosen for three main reasons that were also similarly outlined by Shavelson (1996): (1) it provided a measure to test the strength of association between two variables, (2) to help describe the relationship between two variables, and (3) to determine the magnitude of a relationship between two variables.

The Pearson product moment correlation procedure was used to test the hypotheses regarding expected relationships that had been suggested by the literature. The sample selection method for this study may not have yielded data that were distributed normally, the Pearson product moment correlation procedure has the advantage of being fairly robust with respect to violations of assumptions (McCall, 1980). In this study, the correlation coefficients obtained represent the degree to which two variables are linearly associated.

The relationship is merely descriptive of what is and cannot be interpreted as causal. Further, since data were obtained from a convenience sample, results cannot be generalized to other groups. After the linear correlation

coefficients (Pearson r) were calculated, a one-tailed test of each hypothesis was used. According to Johnson (1988), "when we suspect that there is only a positive or only a negative correlation, we should use a one-tailed test" (p. 481).

The proposal for this research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University. A document verifying approval may be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter will report results of data analysis from 104 young adult males between the ages of 18 and 30, who have not yet become fathers. First, demographic information on the sample will be reported. Secondly, the results relating to each of the hypotheses will be listed. Finally means and standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients will be reported.

Sample

The sample for this study was 104 males. Demographically the sample consisted of two freshman, 12 sophomores, 42 juniors, 46 seniors, and two graduate students. Twenty-one years was the average age for participants. There were 95 Caucasians, 6 African Americans, 1 Native American, and 2 participants who were defined under "Other." Ninety-seven percent of the participant's were citizens of the United States. All but three had been born in the U.S. Approximately 60% of the subjects identified some area of agriculture as their career field. Twenty-one percent identified a combination of business or sales as their career field, 14.4% were undecided as to their career field and

5.7% identified a career related to "other professions." Table I in Appendix D presents a summary of participants' demographic characteristics .

The Relationship between Young Men's Fathers' Parenting Styles and Reasons for Having Children

Hypothesis I states that subjects' desire to change their fathers parenting style will be positively correlated with their reasons for having children. Data pertaining to the variable, fathers parenting style (P_STYLE), was derived from Question 7, Part VIII of the IPM. Subjects were asked, "If given the opportunity, would you have changed your father's style of parenting?" Possible responses included: "definitely yes," "yes," "somewhat," "no," and "definitely no." Responses were assigned values of five through one respectively. The second variable used in testing Hypothesis I was reasons for having children (REASONS). Questions contributing to this variable were all of the items found in Part V of the IPM (see Appendix C). Possible responses for reasons ranged from "very important to me" (assigned a value of 4) to "not at all important to me" (assigned a value of 1. When items "did not apply," a zero was used. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the test of Hypothesis I is .182, significant at .05 level (1-tailed) (see Table II, in Appendix D). Hypothesis I was significantly supported.

The mean for parenting style was 2.79 on a 5-point scale. A mean of this level represents moderate desire by subjects to change their fathers' parenting

style which is associated with a moderately strong support for the reasons for having children ($M = 2.66$) (see Table III in Appendix D).

Young Men's Problems With Having Children
as Related to How Eagerly They Want
to Become Fathers

Hypothesis II states that how a subject rated problems with having children will be positively related to the level at which they anticipate having children. Data included in the variable, problems with having children (PROBW) were derived from Part VI of the IPM (see Appendix C). Questions contributing to this variable were Items 1-3, 5, 9-11, 15-20, and 22-23. Possible responses include: "very important to me," "moderately important to me," "not to important to me," "not at all important to me," and "doesn't apply." Respectively, scale values of 5-0 were assigned.

The second variable used in testing Hypothesis II was subjects' anticipation for having children (ANTIC1). Responses were derived from Part II, Item I of the IPM. Subjects were asked "How eagerly do you anticipate having children?" Possible responses include: "not at all," "hardly at all," "just a little," "somewhat," "fairly much," "quite a bit," "very much," "extremely much," and "more than anything." Responses were assigned values of nine through one respectively. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the test of Hypothesis II is

.214, significant at the .01 level (1-tailed) (see Table II in Appendix D).

Hypothesis II was supported.

The less important subjects rated problems with having children the less likely they were to eagerly anticipate fatherhood. The mean of problems with having children was 1.78, a relatively low rating. Low ratings of problems with having children were associated with a relatively low level of eagerness or anticipation for having children. The mean for anticipation was 5.16 on a 9-point scale, where the value of 9 represented the lowest rating, "not at all" (see Table III in Appendix D).

Young Men's Feelings toward Women's Maternal
Role as Related to Their Reasons
for Becoming Fathers

Hypothesis III states that subject's perceptions of women's maternal role will be positively correlated with their reasons for having children. Data pertaining to the variable, women's maternal role (WROLE), were derived from Part VII of the IPM. Questions contributing to this variable were Items 1-11. Possible responses include: "agree very much," "agree a little," "disagree a little," "and disagree very much." The second variable used to test Hypothesis III was subjects' reasons for having children (REASONS). Questions contributing to this variable were all of the items found in Section V of the IPM (see Appendix C). The Pearson correlation coefficient for the test of Hypothesis III is .285

significant at the .01 level (1-tailed). (see Table II, in Appendix D). Hypothesis III was supported.

The mean for women's role was 2.26 on a 4-point scale which represents, a relatively low to middle level of agreement by subjects that women's role should be that of mother. The mean of reasons for having children was 2.66, also on a 4-point scale, slightly higher than the mean for women's role (see Table III, in Appendix D). An analysis of these results indicated that the subjects departed from strongly traditional views about women's roles and reasons for having children.

The Risks Young Men Are Willing to Take to Become Fathers as Related to How They Feel About Being A Beneficial Father

Hypothesis IV states that the amount of risk a subject is willing to endure to have children will be positively correlated with the level at which they feel a child would benefit from having them as a father. Data pertaining to amount of risk (RISKS), were derived from Part IV, items 2-4 of the IPM. Values of 1 and 2 were assigned to "no" and "yes" respectively. The second variable (CBENEFIT) was derived from Question 9 of Part VIII of the IPM. Subjects were asked, "Do you feel that a child would benefit by having you for a father?" Possible responses include: "definitely yes," "yes," "somewhat," "no," and "definitely no." Responses were assigned values of five through one respectively. The Pearson

correlation coefficient for the test of Hypothesis IV is $-.151$, which was not significant at the $.05$ level (1-tailed) (see Table II, in Appendix D). Therefore, Hypothesis IV was not supported.

An explanation of the trends in the data indicated that the higher the perceived risks of having children the higher men rated themselves as being fathers whose children would benefit from their parenting. The mean risk of having children was 1.64 above the mid-point on a 2-point scale, this represents a moderately high risk by subjects to have children; which is associated with a strong belief by subjects that a child would benefit by having them a father. The mean for "a child would benefit by having them as a father" was 4.28 , almost reaching the top of the 5-point scale (see Table III, in Appendix D). However, it is again noted that the coefficient obtained was not significant.

The Risks Young Men Are Willing to Endure to Become Fathers as Related to How Much They Anticipate Fatherhood

Hypothesis V states that the amount of risk that subjects are willing to endure to have children will be positively correlated with the level at which subjects anticipated having children. Data pertaining to the variable amount of risk (RISKS), were derived from Part IV, Items 2-4, of the IPM. The second variable used in testing Hypothesis V the eagerness for having children was (ANTIC1). The main question contributing to the variable was "How eagerly do

you anticipate having children?" Questions contributing to this variable were all of the Items I, a-i found in Part II, of the IPM (see Appendix C). Possible responses included: "not at all," "hardly at all," "just a little," "somewhat," "fairly much," "quite a bit," "very much," "extremely much," and "more than anything" coded 9-1 respectively. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the test of Hypothesis V is .295, significant at the .01 level (1-tailed) (see Table II, in Appendix D). Hypothesis V was supported.

The higher men rated the risks they were willing to endure to become fathers, the more eagerly they anticipated having children. The mean risks of having children was 1.64, a relatively high value for the 2-point scale. Risks were positively associated with subjects level of anticipation to become fathers, which has a mean of 1.64, on a 9-point scale where a value of one was the highest level of eagerness (see Table III, in Appendix D).

Young Males Views on How Children Impacted Their Parent's Relationship As Related to How They Feel About Aspects of Fatherhood

Hypothesis VI stated that how subjects viewed the effect of children on their parent's relationship will be positively correlated with how they rate stages of fatherhood. Data pertaining to the variable (IMPACT) were derived from Question 11, of the IPM. Subjects were asked, "In general, what effect do you think children had on your parents' relationship?" Responses were assigned

values five 5-2 respectively. The second variable used in testing Hypothesis VI was aspects of fatherhood (STAGES). The main question contributing to this variable was "When you think about having children, how appealing is each of the following aspects of fatherhood?" Questions contributing to this variable were all of the items found in Part III of the IPM. Possible responses include: "very appealing," "somewhat appealing," "not too appealing," and "quite unappealing." The Pearson correlation coefficient for the test of Hypothesis VI was .163, significant at the .05 level (1-tailed) (see Table II, in Appendix D). Hypothesis VI was supported.

The higher men rated stages of fatherhood the higher they rated children as impacting their parents relationship. The mean for stages of fatherhood was 3.14 on a 4-point scale, indicating that the stages of fatherhood are appealing to the subjects. The score for the perceived impact of children on parents' relationship was 4.43 on a 5-point scale. The subjects believed children had a very strong impact on their parents' relationships (see Table III in Appendix D). Given the significance relationship of these variable one might assume that children's impact on parents was not feared because the subjects indicated that the stages of fatherhood were strongly appealing.

Summary

This chapter presented Pearson correlation coefficients for Hypothesis I through VI (also see Table II). Means of the six hypotheses are also shown (also

see Table III). Of the six hypotheses tested, only one was not supported. The results for Hypothesis IV that tested the relationship between risks males were willing to take and their feelings about benefiting a child as a father was not significant. Each of the other five hypotheses was found to be significant (see Table II).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Results

The purpose of this study was to examine young adult males' perceptions toward fatherhood. Current research on this topic was very hard to obtain, however research in the area of fatherhood has increased considerably over the last decade. The male subjects in this study answered a close-ended questionnaire, the Modified Index of Parenthood Motivation. It was expected that there would be a positive relationship between subjects' desire to change their fathers parenting style, and how that related to how subjects felt about reasons for having children (Part V). The results were as predicted, there was a significant correlation between these two variables.

It was also expected that the way subjects rated problems associated with having children would be related to the level at which they looked forward to having children. Results of data analysis supported this prediction. The less important subjects rated problems with having children the less likely they were to eagerly anticipate fatherhood.

How men perceived the role of women as mothers' was expected to be related to how they felt about reasons for having children. Again the results of

data analysis were as predicted. The less important men rated reasons for having children, the less likely they were to view women's roles as mothers.

It was expected that the greater the risks men were willing to take to become fathers the more they felt that a child would benefit from having them as a father. In this instance the data did not support the prediction. The higher the perceived risks of having children the higher men rated themselves as being fathers whose children would benefit from their parenting.

It was further expected that how men rated the risks of having children, would predict their ratings of the appeal of being a father at various stages of fatherhood. As predicted the higher men rated the risks they had to take to become fathers the more they anticipated having children.

Finally it was predicted there would be a positive relationship between how subjects perceived the effects of children on their parent's relationship, and their ratings for the appeal of fatherhood at various stages. As predicted the higher men valued various stages of fatherhood, the higher they rated children as affecting their parents' relationship.

Implications

A goal of this study was to provide information that might change the way men are prepared for fatherhood, by giving men an opportunity to think about how they would deal with fatherhood long before a child is expected. The results of this study provide evidence that could help males understand how early family influences can impact their perceptions of fatherhood. An example of this is in

part found in Hypothesis I. Results indicated that subjects who expressed a moderate desire to change their fathers' parenting style, were also moderate in their perspectives on the reasons for having children. If men are given a forum in which to really think about fatherhood, the result will most certainly be fathers who are more confident and caring with their children.

A final purpose of this study was to give all men who hope to become fathers research that is geared toward them. Expanding the research on fatherhood, will provide men more information on which to base their own perceptions of fatherhood. Interaction with subjects before and after the study indicated to the researchers that most subjects had been given their first real opportunity to think about how they perceive fatherhood. Many subjects expressed an interest in the results of the study, which could mean that they have developed an interest, through the interest shown in them. It is still too early to know how this study and others will impact men who may someday become fathers; however one purpose of this study has been achieved, men who participated in this study were given an opportunity to think about their future role as fathers.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study that should be acknowledged. First, data was collected from a non-random sample of young adult males who were students in one of the three major areas: animal science, agricultural, and

hotel and restaurant management. Given this method of sample selection, this leaves the possibility of selection bias; therefore generalizability is limited to this particular population.

Second, the instrument even with modifications was limiting in the type of information that was obtained from data analysis. With this instrument there was no way to determine in-depth-responses. New instruments need to be created to gain insight into how and why the males responded in the way they did.

Third, demographic characteristics obtained were restrictive in that they consisted of only a small number of minorities. Socioeconomic status may also be considered non-representative as all of the males in this study were currently enrolled in college.

Fourth, the questionnaire used was limiting. Some of the data obtained had to be eliminated from analysis because of inconsistent responses by the participants. Further testing of the instrument with diverse populations could provide additional ideas for simplifying the instructions, format, and content.

Recommendations for Further Study

There is a great deal of fatherhood research that needs to be done, especially on men who have not yet become fathers. Male fertility and fatherhood are a very complex part of social life and are not adequately understood. New questions need to be developed to assess fathers' contributions to their children's development. Either new surveys need to be

developed or existing surveys must be revised. They should include a main set of questions that will facilitate analyses and comparisons across surveys.

More attention should be given to family processes and to specific contexts that both help and hinder expressions of fatherhood and shaping a child. Efforts should be increased by research and funding communities to improve large scale data collection, while at the same time promoting small scale studies that focus in depth on particular fatherhood topics.

Conclusion

There is great need for future fatherhood research that studies males' attitudes and perceptions; while taking an in-depth look at what factors contribute to their involvement or lack of involvement. We could learn a lot as a society and as researchers about how men see their roles as fathers. Research such as this will benefit future generations of children as they form their opinions about fatherhood and what it means to them. Perhaps young men will gain an understanding of what kind of father they will be, before becoming a parent. The majority of men are not given this opportunity until they have already created a child. As a culture we should continue to prepare women for motherhood, while at the same time preparing men for what will be the most important job they will ever undertake, raising a child.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 04-22-98

IRB #: HE-98-094

Proposal Title: YOUNG ADULT MALES PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FUTURE FATHERHOOD ROLES

Principal Investigator(s): Beulah Hirschlein, Sandi Bliss

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

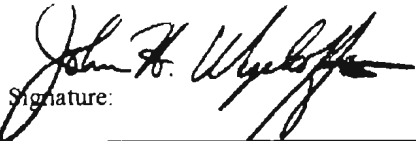
Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:


Signature:

Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Sandi Bliss

Date: April 23, 1998

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a research project being conducted on the Oklahoma State University Campus. The purpose of the study is to obtain information from male college students about their fatherhood perceptions. Our focus is on young adult males who have never had children.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. If you agree to participate, at any time while filling out the research instrument you may decide to stop. Benefits for participants include contributing to increasing our knowledge of how young adult males perceive their possible future roles as fathers.

You are being asked to complete the questionnaire as directed by the researcher. Please answer all of the questions given, leaving no blank spaces. The questionnaire should take approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation in this research study.

"I have read this consent form. The nature, demands, and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions, and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without incurring any ill will. No services of the University will be denied me should I decline to participate or change my mind about participating."

"A copy of the consent form will be given to me. If I have any questions about the rights of research subjects, I may contact Dr. Beulah Hirschlien at (405)744-8347 or Gay Clarkson, Executive Secretary of the Institutional Review Board at OSU, whose office is in Whitehurst 305 and phone number is (405)744-5700."

Participants Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

MODIFIED INDEX OF PARENTHOOD MOTIVATION

INDEX OF PARENTHOOD MOTIVATION - MODIFIED

Mary-Joan Gerson, Ph.D.
Graduate faculties
New School for Social
Research
65 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10003

The Index of Parenthood Motivation is copyrighted. It is described more fully in Gerson, M. J. Motivations for motherhood. Dissertation Abstracts International, 1978, 39, 1954B, (University Microfilms, No. 78, 18420). (Doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1978).

Please do not use without citing author, who would appreciate receiving reports of studies using the measure.

The reliability of the Index was determined by Cronbach's alpha to be .852. The deletion of component 5 raises the alpha to .889.

PART I. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. How old are you? years _____ months _____ .
2. Are you a: freshman _____ sophomore _____ junior _____ senior _____ ?
3. What is your ethnicity?
_____ Caucasian, _____ African American, _____ Native American,
_____ Hispanic American, _____ Asian American,
Other (please specify) _____
4. Were you born in the United States? yes _____ no _____

If no, what is your country of origin? _____

If yes, how long have you lived in the United States? _____
5. What is your career choice? _____

If uncertain, please indicate.
6. Are you divorced? yes _____ no _____
7. What was your family's religious affiliation?
 - a. Protestant
 - b. Catholic
 - c. Jewish
 - d. Other (specify) _____
8. Do you identify yourself with an organized religion now? yes _____ no _____
9. If so, what organized religion do you identify with?
 - a. Protestant
 - b. Catholic
 - c. Jewish
 - d. Other (specify) _____
10. What was your birth position in your family?

1st child _____ 2nd _____ 3rd _____ 4th _____ 5th _____ other (specify) _____
11. How many children were there in your family? _____
12. Were you adopted? yes _____ no _____

PART II. PARENTHOOD MOTIVATION SURVEY

1. How eagerly do you anticipate having children? **Choose only one answer.**

- a. not at all (9)
- b. hardly at all (8)
- c. just a little (7)
- d. somewhat (6)
- e. fairly much (5)
- f. quite a bit (4)
- g. very much (3)
- h. extremely much (2)
- i. more than anything (1)

2. Please rank the following **adult activities** (1=highest; 10=lowest) in terms of:

- A. Their value to society
- B. Their requiring individual creativity
- C. Your personal interest in pursuing them

Remember, the first, highest ranked activity is given a "1" and the lowest ranked activity is given a "10". Use every number from 1 through 10 within Column A, Column B, and Column C.

ACTIVITIES		A ranking	B ranking	C ranking
1.	Athletics			
2.	Art, music or writing			
3.	Business			
4.	Child raising			
5.	Community service (i.e., church, school, scouts)			
6.	Foreign travel			
7.	Health services			
8.	Political activities			
9.	Research			
10.	Teaching			

PART III. STAGES OF FATHERHOOD

When you think about having children, how appealing is each of the following aspects of fatherhood?

STAGES	4 very appealing	3 somewhat appealing	2 not too appealing	1 quite unappealing
1. partner's pregnancy				
2. childbirth				
3. having an infant				
4. having a pre-school child				
5. having a school age child				
6. having a grown child				

PART IV. RISKS

1. Assuming that all can be expected to go well, how many children would you like to have? (If "none" write "0".) _____
2. Assuming that your doctor advises you that childbirth is risky to your partner's health, would you: (answer both)
 - a. be inclined to risk having at least one child?
yes _____ no _____
 - b. probably adopt one or more children?
yes _____ no _____
3. Assuming that having a child would entail financial hardship, would you still try?
try _____ postpone the decision _____ not have a child _____
4. If there were a considerable risk that your child would not be normal, would you be inclined to take the risk?
yes _____ no _____, but would go ahead if accidentally became pregnant
no _____, would abort if accidentally became pregnant

PART V REASONS FOR HAVING CHILDREN

Listed below are some reasons for wanting a child. For each item, please indicate how important that particular reason is in your own thinking.

	4 Very Important	3 Moderately Important	2 Not Too Important	1 Not At All Important	0 Doesn't Apply To Me
REASONS					
1. to feel really useful and needed					
2. to give life meaning					
3. to experience the honesty and freshness of children					
4. because you can give someone your values and ideals					
5. to be like other men you'll know					
6. children add interest and spice to family life					
7. a child brings a husband and wife closer					
8. to participate in the miracle of birth					
9. to have someone to stand by you when you're old					
10. it's part of being a grown man					
11. so that there will be one more person to help your family economically					
12. because you might raise someone who could help change the world for the better					
13. because being a parent is something you feel you can do well					
14. to re-experience the world of childhood					
15. to have someone to be proud of					
16. to raise a child as you would like to have been brought up					

Please go back now and put a check to the left of the three items that best fit what you see as the main advantages of having children.

PART VI PROBLEMS WITH HAVING CHILDREN

If you were to decide not to have children, or not to have more than a certain number, what would be the reasons? The following list includes some of the concerns people report about having children. For each item, please indicate how important that particular reason is in your own thinking.

PROBLEMS	Very Important To Me 4	Moderately Important To Me 3	Not Too Important To Me 2	Not at All Important To Me 1	Doesn't Apply 0
1 it makes it difficult to pursue a career					
2 it involves too many boring routines					
3 there are too many responsibilities involved					
4 there is a problem of overpopulation					
5 you lose the freedom to do as you please					
6 people have them for selfish reasons					
7 they might turn out badly through no fault of your own					
8 they might turn out badly because you didn't do a good job					
9 it is expensive to raise them					
10 you are not as free to end a bad marriage					
11 it interferes with the husband-wife relationship					
12 pregnancy and childbirth are unpleasant					
13 the world is a mess, why bring someone into it					
14 children are not particularly fun to be with					
15 you lose your privacy					
16 you're not as free to travel					
17 you're not as free to leave the house					
18 it is a lot of work					
19 it involves unpleasant work					
20 you no longer feel young					
21 it's just doing what everyone expects					
22 it is physically tiring					
23 it leaves you too little time for yourself					

Please go back now and put a check to the left of the three items that best fit what you see as the main problems with having children.

PART VII. PARENTING PERCEPTIONS

Please check your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	Agree Very Much 4	Agree a Little 3	Disagree a Little 2	Disagree Very Much 1
PERCEPTIONS				
1 A woman is biologically conditioned to have a child				
2 If a woman fails to have a child, she violates her true nature				
3 A woman who doesn't have children has to be prepared to face suspicion and/or criticism				
4 When a woman becomes pregnant she is no longer in control of her own body				
5 A woman who adopts her children loses out on an important mode of self-fulfillment that she would get from the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth				
6 A woman who adopts her children loses the special bond with them that she would get from bearing them herself				
7 A woman who adopts her children loses the opportunity to transmit her genetic heritage to her children				
8 Motherhood severely limits a woman's opportunities for achievement and self-expression				
9 A woman should not have children if they would probably interfere with her career or independence				
10 A woman should not have children if her mate is not prepared to share fully in the chores associated with raising them				
11 A woman who does not expect to marry should still plan to have children and raise them herself				
12 Fatherhood severely limits a man's opportunities for achievement and self expression				
13 A man should not have children if they would interfere with his career or independence				
14 A man should not have children if he is not prepared to share fully in the chores associated with raising them				
15 A man who does not expect to marry should not have children				
16 A man who doesn't have children has to be prepared to face suspicion and/or criticism				
17 A man who adopts children loses out on an important mode of self-fulfillment that comes from the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth				
18 A man who adopts children loses the special bond with them that he would get if they were biologically his				
19 A man who adopts his children loses the opportunity to transmit his genetic heritage to them				

PART VIII . REFLECTIONS ON PARENTS

1. Overall, how much did your mother enjoy raising children?
 - a. very much (5)
 - b. a little more than most mothers (4)
 - c. as much as the average mother (3)
 - d. a little less less than most mothers (2)
2. Overall, how good a job of mothering would you say she did?
 - a. very good (5)
 - b. a little better than most mothers (4)
 - c. as good as the average mother (3)
 - d. a little worse than most mothers (2)
 - e. rather poor (1)
3. Overall, how much did your father enjoy raising children?
 - a. very much (5)
 - b. a little more than most fathers (4)
 - c. as much as the average father (3)
 - d. a little less than most fathers (2)
 - e. very little (1)
4. Overall, how good a job of fathering would you say he did?
 - a. very good (5)
 - b. a little better than most fathers (4)
 - c. as good as the average father (3)
 - d. a little worse than most fathers (2)
 - e. rather poor (1)
5. Overall, what type of parent was your father?
 - a. strict and controlling (1)
 - b. warm and supporting (5)
 - c. indulgent (3)
 - d. permissive and supporting (4)
 - e. neglectful (2)
6. To what extent would you plan to be the same type of father that your father was to you?
 - a. definitely would like to be a father like my dad was (5)
 - b. would try to be somewhat like my father (4)
 - c. would try not to be the type of my father was (3)
 - d. definitely would not want to be the same type of father that my father was (2)

7. If given the opportunity, would you have changed your father's style of parenting?
- a. definitely yes (5)
 - b. yes (4)
 - c. somewhat (3)
 - d. no (2)
 - e. definitely no (1)
8. Overall, how do you feel about the way your father raised you?
- a. very positive (5)
 - b. positive (4)
 - c. neither positive or negative (3)
 - d. negative (2)
 - e. very negative (1)
9. Do you feel that a child would benefit by having you as a father?
- a. definitely yes (5)
 - b. yes (4)
 - c. somewhat (3)
 - d. no (2)
 - e. definitely no (1)
10. In general, how happy was your family life compared to other families you knew when you were growing up?
- a. very happy (5)
 - b. a little happier than average (4)
 - c. as happy as the average family (3)
 - d. a little less happy than the average (2)
 - e. very unhappy (1)
11. In general, what effect do you think children had on your parents' relationship?
- a. brought them closer together (5)
 - b. was a source of disagreement or friction (4)
 - c. had little effect (3)
 - d. had no effect whatsoever (2)
12. Overall do you feel that your father taught you what it would be like to be a father someday?
- a. definitely yes (5)
 - b. yes (4)
 - c. no (3)
 - d. definitely no (2)

APPENDIX D

TABLES

TABLE I

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	19-yrs	2	01.9	01.9
	20-yrs	12	11.5	13.4
	21-yrs	34	32.7	46.1
	22-yrs	29	27.9	74.0
	23-yrs	17	16.3	90.3
	24-yrs	8	07.7	98.0
	25-yrs & up	<u>2</u>	<u>01.9</u>	99.9 ^a
	Total	104	99.9 ^a	
Classification	Freshman	2	01.9	01.9
	Sophomore	12	11.5	13.4
	Junior	42	40.4	53.8
	Senior	46	44.2	98.0 ^a
	Graduate	<u>2</u>	<u>01.9</u>	99.0 ^a
		104	99.9 ^a	
Ethnicity	Caucasian	95	91.3	91.3
	African Am.	6	5.8	97.1
	Native Am.	1	1.0	98.1
	Other	<u>2</u>	<u>1.9</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	
Citizen	US Citizen	101	97.1	97.1
	Non-US Cit.	<u>3</u>	<u>2.9</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	

(Table continues)

Table I, continued

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Country	USA	101	97.1	97.1
	Other	<u>3</u>	<u>2.9</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	
Length of Res.	19-yrs or less	4	03.8	03.8
	20-yrs	13	12.5	16.3
	21-yrs	33	31.7	48.0
	22-yrs	31	29.8	77.8
	23-yrs	13	12.5	90.3
	24-yrs	8	07.7	98.0
	25-yrs or more	<u>2</u>	<u>01.9</u>	99.9 ^a
		104	100.0	
Career	Vet/An. Sci.	18	17.3	17.3
	Ag/Ag. Ed./Edu.	32	30.8	48.1
	Farm/Ranch	12	11.5	59.6
	Bus./Sales	21	20.2	79.8
	Other Profess.	6	05.8	85.6
	Uncertain	<u>15</u>	<u>14.4</u>	100.0
		104		
Divorce	Divorced	0	0.0	0.0
	Not Divorced	<u>104</u>	<u>100.0</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	
Religion	None	2	1.9	1.9
	Protestant	38	36.5	38.5
	Catholic	8	7.7	46.2
	Jewish	1	1.0	47.1
	Other	<u>55</u>	<u>52.9</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	

(Table continues)

Table I, continued

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Org. Relig.				
	Yes	85	81.7	81.7
	No	<u>19</u>	<u>18.3</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	
Org. Relig. 2				
	None	17	16.3	16.3
	Protestant	37	35.6	51.9
	Catholic	8	7.7	59.6
	Jewish	1	1.0	60.6
	Other	<u>41</u>	<u>39.4</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	
Birth Position				
	First Child	51	49.0	49.0
	Second Child	38	36.5	85.6
	Third Child	11	10.6	96.1
	Fourth Child	3	2.9	99.0
	Fifth Child	<u>1</u>	<u>1.0</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	
No.Child in Family				
	One	5	4.8	4.8
	Two	49	47.1	51.9
	Three	40	38.5	90.4
	Four	7	6.7	97.1
	Six	2	1.9	99.0
	Eight	<u>1</u>	<u>1.0</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	
Adopted				
	Yes	1	1.0	1.0
	No	<u>103</u>	<u>99.0</u>	100.0
		104	100.0	

^a Due to rounding the percent may not always equal 100.

TABLE II

Correlation Coefficients for Hypotheses I – VI

VARIABLES	REASONS	ANTIC_1	BENEFIT	IMPACT
P_STYLE	.182** (H ₁)			
PROBW		.214* (H ₂)		
WROLE	.285** (H ₃)			
RISKS		.295** (H ₅)	-.151 (H ₄)	
STAGES				.163* (H ₆)

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

TABLE III

Means and Standard Deviations for Correlation Coefficients

Scale	M	Maximum Scale Value	SD
Fathers' Parenting Style (P_STYLE)	2.79	5.0	1.22
Reasons for Having Children (REASONS)	2.66	4.0	.631
Problems with Having Children (PROBW)	1.78	4.0	.755
Anticipate Fatherhood (ANTIC1)	5.16	9.0 ^a	2.03
Women's Role as Mothers (WROLE)	2.26	4.0	.439
Risks to Have Children (RISKS)	1.64	2.0	.227
Children Benefit (CBENEFIT)	4.28	5.0	.796
Stages of Fatherhood (STAGES)	3.14	4.0	.722
Impact on Parents' Relationship (IMPACT)	4.43	5.0	.878

^a Inverse scoring.

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